

Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

December 2007 - January 2008



February Volunteer Trails Day – Pinhoti Trail at Strawberry Mountain (Not Pictured: Charlie Crider, Gail Milner, Carole Pinion, Sherry Neidich, and Christy Neidich)



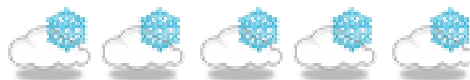
December – Volunteers were out in force in what has traditionally been a slower work month. **SORBA North GA Chapter** kicked things off in a big way maintaining grade dips on the Pinhoti Trail at Horn Mountain. **SORBA members** present and accounted for included **Jonathan Cavanaugh, George Cavanaugh, Chris Hohol, Steve Sharp, Phillip White, Bill Hester, Ben Gaither, Rhonda Eichenberger, Tony Boyd, Gary Geren and Bill Semsrott**. The motorized trails at Houston Valley ORV Area got some much needed trimming by **22 motorcyclists and ATV-riders** in an event sponsored by **Kirk's Cycles of Dalton**. **Jonathan Cavanaugh** returned to Horn Mountain to continue maintenance on the Pinhoti Trail. **Troy and Wanda Brown** spent

a day reconning the Sumac Creek Trail for maintenance needs. The next day the **Browns** were hard at it starting a waterbar maintenance project on the northern section of the Hickory Creek Trail. **Jim Holland, Ira Davenport and Ken Napierkowski** accomplished routine maintenance of the Jacks River Fields campground. **Wanda Brown** went solo on a recon of the Windy Gap Trail. Sixteen volunteer birders spent a cold but successful day recording 64 bird species during the annual Christmas Bird Count. **Troy and Wanda Brown** tackled blowdown removal on the Tearbitches Trail clearing all the way to the river in one long day. **Rodger Atkins** spent 5 days this month clearing brush from the Johns Mountain Overlook, painting over graffiti, and picking



Gail Milner, Amos Burrell, & Charlie Crider – hard at it on Hickory Creek Trail dips.

up litter on the Pocket Road and around the overlook and its access road. In what is to be a long term project, **Larry Wheat** began the layout of the planned large-scale Dry Creek Trail system located south of Villanow. And finally, five hardy souls, our own **Amos Burrell, Bob and Mary Korch, and Troy and Wanda Brown**, spent a tough day rehabbing campsites, clearing blowdowns and trimming the Beech Bottom Trail. All told, **59 volunteers** contributed **382.5 hours** to the cause over this busy Christmas holiday month...an awesome effort. **Great job everyone!**



January – **Bill and Debra Hester** started things off by clearing blowdowns from a section of the Pinhoti Trail on Johns Mountain. **Troy and Wanda Brown** scouted the Taylor's Ridge Trail for maintenance needs. **Rodger Atkins** spent three days picking up trash on the Johns Mountain Overlook Road and the area around the overlook. Short work was made of a tall trail maintenance order when **Backcountry Horsemen members Larry Wheat, Jim and Ruth McGarvey, Lena Hall, Oscar Gonzalez Corona, Janet Brooks, Lynne Walsh and Mike Rogers** cleared blowdowns and removed trash from the Pinhoti Trail on Strawberry Mountain. **Wanda and Troy Brown** assisted in flagging the locations of new grade dips to be constructed on the Hickory Creek Trail. **Larry Wheat** was back at Dry Creek locating new trail to be constructed. Thirteen hardy volunteers braved frigid temperatures in the 20's over Working Weekend #49 to construct 34 new grade dips, maintain 61 existing water bars and clear blowdowns on the upper Hickory Creek Trail over a two day period...Friday volunteers included **Amos Burrell, Jim Bishop, Gail Milner, Charlie Crider, Wanda Brown and Troy Brown** who were joined on Saturday by **Chad Mulkey, Wes Mullins, Bob Korch, Mary Korch, Larry Jones, Helen Chamberlain, and Tom Owens**. **Troy and Wanda Brown** returned the following weekend to continue the dip construction project. **Rodger Atkins** can also testify to cold February temperatures when he began a major reconstruction project on the Johns Mountain Overlook deck...**Rodger** went on to put in five more busy days on the deck

project this month. **Larry Wheat** returned again to Dry Creek to continue his large-scale trail layout project. And, SORBA's own **Geri Geren** worked on blowdown removal on the Pilcher's Pond section of the Pinhoti Trail. TEAM Conasauga logged **369.25 hours** this month...Thanks to everyone for an incredible month!

HOW DO YOU SPELL RELIEF? TEAM CONASAUGA!!!



As spring approaches you are more likely to encounter river crossings as you go about your trail maintenance tasks. And, with spring weather comes the inevitable thunderstorms and the potential for high water. Here are some safety tips to remember before you make that river ford:

- *Always consider the use of a walking stick or staff. This gives you added support as you wade the river or if you are rock hopping. The stick also gives you a way of measuring the water depth.*
- *Often at stream crossings hikers instantly grasp the nearest tree, limb or shrub as they enter or exit the water and get stung by hornets, wasps, and yellow jackets as they do. Therefore, before you cross that stream scan the surrounding vegetation for the nests that these creatures call home.*
- *When wading one should attempt to move slowly along the surface of the stream bottom taking short steps. At times your feet must be your eyes as they probe the stream's many obstacles. Try to find patches of sand or fine gravel to place your feet and avoid underwater rocks which are generally slippery.*
- *Don't wade barefoot. Sharp rocks and man-made objects such as glass and fishhooks pose unseen dangers. If your just making a few water crossings, bring a pair of sandals or old tennis shoes you can change into. If you plan to be in and out of the river most of the day, I'd recommend just wearing your boots, but bring extra socks and a small towel to dry your feet.*
- *When fording deeper river crossings or swift water, it is advisable to unstrap the waist belt from larger backpacks. Why? If you fall you want to come out of your pack and not have it take you underwater.*
- *Last but far from least, streams and rivers in the mountains can rise very rapidly after heavy downpours making them virtually impossible to ford safely. Remember you can turn*



back. If high water blocks the path to your trailhead, you may have to wait until the waters recede sometimes as long as 24 hours.



CONASAUGA LORE...

If you have traveled to the Rice Camp trailhead over the East Cowpen road (FS51), you have passed an interesting piece of Conasauga lore left over from the 1930's logging era. It may take some searching, but if you look real close you can find a woman's face carved into the rock on the road cutbank. As the story goes, there was a boy who lived and worked in a logging camp back when the Conasauga River Lumber Company was logging the Jigger Creek drainage. He had family who worked on one of the logging crews. With extra time on his hands, the boy carved the face of a beautiful woman into a piece of flat rock on the roadside. He went on to sign and date his artwork. The identity of the woman is a mystery, but you can still find her. Curious? Drive past the Jigger Creek Falls a couple hundred feet. Look for the "mystery lady" on the side of the road directly across from a big 24" loblolly pine and a 12" sweetgum. Happy hunting!

Meet our New Wilderness/Trails/Dispersed Areas Employee

Several of you have asked so here's the scoop on our newest district employee, **Nick Walendziak**...

Twenty-six years young, Nick was raised in Worcester, Massachusetts where he lived until age 17. He attended Colby College in Waterville, Maine and spent his summers with family in Alpharetta, GA. Nick graduated in 2004 with a B.A. in Science and Technology with an emphasis in Computer Science. He is close to finishing his thesis for a Masters degree in Recreation Resource Management from Eastern Kentucky University. He has a passion for the outdoors and enjoys rock climbing, backpacking, kayaking, mountain biking and skiing



Nick comes to us from the Daniel Boone National Forest where he worked for 2 years as a seasonal Backcountry Ranger in a large Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) study area encompassing the Clifty Wilderness. His duties entailed Leave-No-Trace visitor education, LAC planning, and recreation site restoration. He also coordinated the work of college interns and Student Conservation Association (SCA) volunteers.

To quote Nick..."Thanks for welcoming me to this beautiful place with the best volunteers around."



For those volunteers traveling to district work days from the Atlanta area, you may need to allow extra travel time as construction on I-75 is heating up again between Lake Allatoona and I-575. If you're returning home southbound on I-75, the Emerson Exit is one alternative route. Another southbound alternative is US Hwy 411 south, cut over to Waleska, and then down I-575.



Mark your calendars for the upcoming work dates:

March 22

Beech Bottom Trail. Water bar maintenance and trimming. Meet at Beech Bottom trailhead at 9:00AM. Horses welcome

April 25, 26, 27

Working Weekend #50 – Hickory Ridge/East Cowpen Trail. Water bar maintenance and trimming. Meet at Rice Camp trailhead at 9:00AM each day. Backpack or day hike. Horses welcome.

May 17

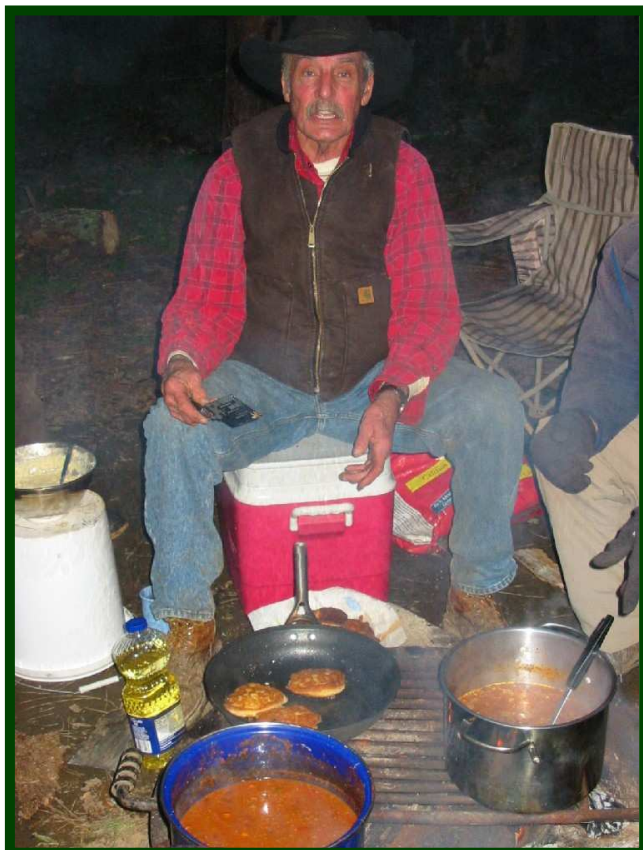
To be announced

June 7

National Trails Day - To be announced



Rodger Atkins proudly displays his handiwork at the John's Mountain Overlook.



Chef Charlie Crider served up some fine vittles to hungry trail maintainers at Working Weekend #49

A perfectly constructed dip thanks to Tom Owens and Chad Mulkey.

